

MENOPAUSE

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
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Menopause is the time in a woman's life when menstruation stops. Most women go through menopause between ages 45 and 60.

Menopause is usually a gradual process. The ovaries begin to produce lower amounts of hormones. The reduced amounts of hormones cause periods to become irregular and eventually to stop completely. These hormonal changes may also cause other symptoms.

Menopause can also occur when the ovaries are surgically removed.

What are the symptoms?

You may have both physical and psychological (mental or emotional) symptoms during menopause. Symptoms may occur for a few weeks, a few months, or sometimes over several years. Your symptoms may come and go, or they may occur regularly.

These physical symptoms are common during menopause:

- \$ irregular menstrual periods
- \$ hot flashes and night sweats
- \$ sleeplessness
- \$ vaginal dryness
- \$ dry skin
- \$ more frequent urination or leakage of urine
- \$ more frequent minor vaginal and urinary infections



Psychological symptoms of menopause may include:

- \$ anxiety
- \$ depression
- \$ crying, irritability
- \$ lack of concentration
- \$ more trouble remembering things

How is it diagnosed?

Menopause can often be diagnosed through your medical history. Your health care provider will then examine you. He or she may order blood tests. A pelvic exam and Pap smear may show effects of decreased hormones.

How is it treated?

Menopause is a natural part of a woman's life cycle. It is not a disease and does not necessarily require any treatment. However, certain health problems, such as osteoporosis (weakening of the bones) and increased heart disease, are associated with low hormones (estrogen). To help prevent such problems, many women choose to take estrogen to replace the hormones that their body is no longer producing. You and your health care provider should discuss if this treatment is the right choice for you.

How can I take care of myself?

To help your general mental and physical well-being, you should:

- \$ Have a mammogram every 2 years between the ages of 40 and 50, and every year after age 50.
- \$ Modify your diet: eat more foods that are high in calcium (such as dark green vegetables and dairy products) and try to avoid high-fat foods.
- \$ Get regular physical exercise.